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WEBB, S. and B. *The prevention of destitution*. (New York: Longmans. 1911. Pp. viii, 348. \$2.00.)

Propounds a constructive policy which would enable the English nation to do away with the great bulk of involuntary destitution.

Socialism and Co-operative Enterprises

Socialism: A Critical Analysis. By OSCAR D. SKELTON. Hart Schaffner and Marx Prize Essays in Economics. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1911. Pp. ix, 329.)

Of all the recent critiques of socialism Dr. Skelton's book is easily first. It is free from the silly misrepresentations which characterize the only recent work of its kind with which it suggests comparison—Mr. Mallock's *A Critical Examination of Socialism*. In the discussion of socialism as it relates to the family and religion, the author is careful to avoid the vicious practice of gleaning all the incidents and isolated phrases upon which an appeal to passion and prejudice can be based. This is a decided relief in a work avowedly antagonistic to socialism.

It is to be regretted that the writer could not have added to this negative virtue the positive merit of approaching his subject with a more open mind. His bias is too often manifest. To quote only a single example of this: In the discussion of Marx's theory of value Marx is accused of bringing in "by a side door" the factor of utility (p. 117) and of admitting only "grudgingly and imperfectly" the factor of utility in determining value (p. 119). Yet, one need not read outside of the passages from Marx's writings which Dr. Skelton quotes to realize that, whether the Marxian theory of value be accepted or not, it cannot be denied that recognition of the importance of utility is a fundamental postulate of the theory. In dealing with the socialist movement Dr. Skelton again and again imputes something very like dishonesty to the leaders of the movement because they have from time to time changed their programs. This is especially true in his discussion of the changed attitude of the party toward the farmers, especially in France and the United States. "Vote-catching" is his only explanation. The fact that there has been an honest and frank recognition of the fact that Marx was wrong in his prediction that the independent farm must disappear, swallowed up in an immense centralized agricultural industry; and that the fundamental aim of socialism in no wise requires the

suppression of individual farm ownership and operation, is lost sight of. Yet a careful and candid reading of the *Communist Manifesto* would show that even Marx and Engels conceived the compatibility of the continuance of private property and industry where there was no class exploitation. Even while Marx was still alive, Paul Lafargue, his son-in-law and his most unpromising disciple, took the position which is now generally adopted by the great socialist parties of Europe and America.

Socialism is a developing movement rather than a fixed doctrine. Marxism, rightly conceived, is a method, rather than a *corpus* of dogma. Of course, Dr. Skelton has no difficulty in finding "glaring contradictions" in the utterances made from time to time by socialist parties and individuals. Liebknecht used to boast that the social democracy of Germany was more receptive to new truths and scientific discoveries than any other body of German citizens, even when these necessitated changes in theoretical statement or tactics.

Perhaps the most characteristic example of the defective logical method of the author is afforded by his treatment of the Utopian experiments and the causes of their uniform failure. They failed, we are told, because the Utopians thought that social constitutions could be abolished at will, and new ones instituted in their place in accordance with carefully devised plans and schemes. Their weakness was internal, inherent. By a curious ratiocinative process Dr. Skelton concludes that the socialism advocated by the Marxian school would fail for the same reasons that the Utopian experiments failed. And yet, the answer to his objection is to be found in his own description of the evolutionary basis of Marxian socialism.

When we make full allowance for the cumulative effect of the author's criticisms upon minor and detached features of the socialist propaganda and policy and consider the bearing of the book upon essential and fundamental things, we are forced to the conclusion that too much is admitted to make the criticism very effective. His modification of Marx's materialistic conception of history does not go beyond the modifications of the early statements of the theory made by Marx's co-worker, Frederick Engels, toward the close of his life. What is more important, perhaps, is the fact that Marx himself, notably in his commentaries upon Feuerbach, went quite as far in his recognition of the

part played by the idealogical factors as did Engels in the letters referred to. It appears to be the natural temper of the controversialist which leads the author to say (p. 105): "The attempt at a monistic interpretation of history, the endeavor to find one pass-key which will unlock all the secrets of the past, is reluctantly and silently abandoned." In the first place, this description of Marx's theory is, as Engels showed, quite ridiculous; in the second place, after the reference to the letters of Engels in particular, Dr. Skelton can hardly justify the suggestion that the "abandonment" which he charges has been "silent."

The doctrine of the class struggle which is inseparable from the materialistic interpretation of history is assailed in its exaggerated form. He does not deny the existence of classes with conflicting interests: "Yet when all qualifications are made, class struggles for economic advantage are a grim reality. Only a blind optimism can deny the reality of the divergence of economic interests and the reality of the conflict which sometimes results" (p. 112). What Dr. Skelton attacks is the notion that a single line of cleavage divides modern society into two fixed classes. Here, again, he does not pay sufficient attention to the best statements of the theory by Kautsky and other writers. He finds a curious paradox in Marx's reasoning that while all progress has been effected through class struggles, with the conquest of society by the proletariat the possibility of economic class formations will disappear. He suggests that the only explanation of the paradox is the teleological optimism of the Hegelian philosophy to which Marx clung. He is concerned, also, for the future of society; "we are headed for a stereotyped state," he concludes. We suggest that the difficulty lies with Dr. Skelton: that it is born of his earnest desire to make a point in the controversy in which he is engaged. Marx does not teach that class struggle is the "source of all progress in the past" (p. 113). The class struggle is rather the channel; the source is the improvement in the method of production and exchange and the social organization resulting therefrom. This distinction is too important to be disregarded, and due recognition of it weakens, if it does not altogether destroy, the force of the author's argument.

The book is a clever rather than a profound criticism. It is a book which students of the subject may read with profit,—especially those who are socialists.

JOHN SPARGO.